

VFW

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 2026
ISSUE 04



1ST PLACE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOTS PEN WINNERS ANNOUNCED

- VFW RIDERS
- CHIEF'S VISIT TO MA
- CONVENTION
INFORMATION



TABLE OF Contents

3

COMMANDER'S CORNER

7

QUARTERMASTER'S DESK

9

SR. VICE COMMANDER'S BRIEF

11

JUDGE ADVOCATE

14

NATIONAL COUNCIL
MEMBER

18

VFW COOTIES

5

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

8

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

10

JR VICE COMMANDER'S BRIEF

12

STATE SURGEON

17

VFW RIDERS

23

YOUTH
SCHOLARSHIPS

LETTER FROM OUR COMMANNER



It is unfathomable to me that we are over half way through the year already! As we enter the post-holiday period and find ourselves in the dead of winter, I don't find myself slowing down one bit. That is because of you and your continuous, untiring dedication to the mission which gives me lots of events to attend at your invitation.

I had the pleasure of visiting several Posts on the Cape and Martha's Vinyard just before Thanksgiving with Chief of Staff, Joe Zustra. This followed the annual Plymouth Thanksgiving Day parade in pouring rain, where we were somehow roped into carrying the banner! What a terrific time with the Plymouth Post and those we visited in Onset (talk about energy) Bourne, and Oak Bluffs.

I cannot tell you how proud I am of this Department and all of the advocacy that you have accomplished thus far. From fighting for tax abatements at the local level, to ensuring that our communities have competent VSO's, to hosting meetings with legislators that focus on our State Legislative priorities. We are accomplishing so much and we still have five months to go!

Each of our Legislative priorities on Beacon Hill have been reported favorably out of committee:

1. Full tax abatement for Veterans who are 65+ years of age and have a VA disability rating of 100%
2. Decreasing the fee for MA Veterans plates from \$100 to \$50
3. Authorizing electronic gaming in our Post buildings
4. Expanding ST-2 eligibility to 501(c)19's and not just (c)3's so that we can be exempt from assessment of State meals and sales tax

Getting these priorities out of committee is a major step in a very convoluted process to becoming law. It is imperative that we continue to fight for these items by contacting our legislators to support them, especially if they are in leadership positions. I would like to thank PSC and current State Legislative Chairman, Doug Wood for the phenomenal job he has been accomplishing on behalf of the VFW at the State House.

I would also like to personally recognize the work that each of you did on Veterans Day, for Wreaths Across America which saw our own NSA Brian Willette participating in the convoy, and for visiting our elder Veterans throughout the year.

I would further like to thank and recognize each of our State Officers, along with PSC's Mike Raymond and Aaron Richardson, as well as District Commanders Barrett, Jones, Emerling, Robinson, and Casey for serving the Department on Administrative Committees to help our Posts who may have fallen a bit behind for a variety of reasons, get caught up to standard. Your expertise and willingness to help has made an immeasurable difference and those Posts would not be in the great shape that they are currently in had it not been for your willingness to roll up your sleeves and help.

CONTINUE

Finally, I must address everyone's favorite (eh hem) subject: membership. We are a bit behind where we should be currently. At the beginning of the year, we should be at 90% or better and we ended 2025 at 88.65% Not a horrible position, but at least 200 members short of where we should be. With \$65,000 to spend for half-off life memberships, it has never been more affordable to transition your annual members to life member status. We must also double our recruiting efforts so that we are prepared to bring in new members whenever we are conducting VFW business. Ultimately, the Posts own membership and your example during ceremonies and events is usually what seals the deal for prospective members to approach you and sign up. So, keep up the great work you've always done and have applications on hand always!

Troy Henke

STATE COMMANDER



FROM THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT



United by Service: Understanding How VFW Auxiliary Members Are Related to Veterans of Foreign Wars

Honoring Service Through Family Connection

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Auxiliary stands as a proud extension of the VFW, united in purpose and dedicated to honoring the service and sacrifice of America's veterans. Since its founding in 1914, the Auxiliary has worked alongside the VFW to provide unwavering support to service members, veterans, and their families.

At the heart of Auxiliary membership lies a special bond—a direct relationship to a veteran who served overseas in a foreign conflict recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. This connection is the foundation of the organization, ensuring every member has a personal link to the cause they champion so passionately.

Who Can Belong to the VFW Auxiliary?

Membership in the VFW Auxiliary is open to those related to a veteran or service member who is eligible for VFW membership. Eligible relatives include:

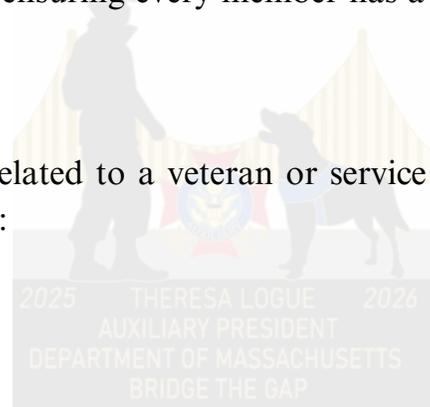
- Spouse or widowed spouse
- Parent or grandparent
- Child (biological, adopted, or stepchild)
- Grandchild
- Brother or sister

These familial ties form the bridge that connects civilian life to the living legacy of military service, ensuring that every Auxiliary member shares a personal commitment to veterans' welfare and remembrance.

Service Requirements: The Veteran Connection

For Auxiliary eligibility, the family member through whom one joins must have:

1. Served honorably in the United States Armed Forces; and
2. Participated in a conflict, operation, or duty station outside the United States, recognized by the VFW as qualifying foreign service.



FROM THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Such service is verified through campaign medals, overseas ribbons, or other commendations included on the veteran's DD-214 or other military records. Qualifying service includes, but is not limited to:

- World War I and II
- Korean War
- Vietnam War
- Persian Gulf War
- Service in Iraq, Afghanistan, or other designated combat zones

The Meaning Behind the Membership

The strength of the VFW Auxiliary comes from the shared values and experiences that members bring from their veteran relatives. Whether honoring a father's service in Vietnam, a spouse's deployment to Iraq, or a grandparent's bravery in World War II, every member represents a proud family connection to America's defense.

That connection transforms into action—from supporting veterans in need, to volunteering at hospitals, to advocating for improved benefits and recognition. Each Auxiliary member carries forward the spirit of service that lives within their family.

Verifying Eligibility of the Auxiliary Member

Prospective members are encouraged to work with their local VFW Auxiliary to gather the necessary documentation, which may include:

- A copy of the veteran's DD-214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty)
- Proof of the family relationship (birth, marriage, or adoption certificates)
- Verification that the veteran's service qualifies under VFW guidelines

Auxiliary officers are always available to assist applicants and help them confirm eligibility through available records.

A Tradition That Lives On

Membership in the VFW Auxiliary is more than an affiliation—it is a continuation of service. Through their work, members uphold the values of loyalty, sacrifice, and patriotism that define the veterans they honor.

In serving veterans and their families, Auxiliary members extend their loved ones' legacy of courage and care, ensuring that every generation remembers what it means to serve and to stand united for our nation's heroes.

A Personal Tradition of Service

For myself, my grandfathers served in WWI, my father and uncles served in WWII, and a few of my uncles also served in Korea. My cousin, "Kip" served in Vietnam. My husband, Patrick, while active-duty Air Force, did duty in the Gulf War, and my son-in-law served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While these brave Veterans served overseas, the women and family members left behind in their lives did service in the Auxiliary or in various service organizations to honor them and their service. My family still does this today.

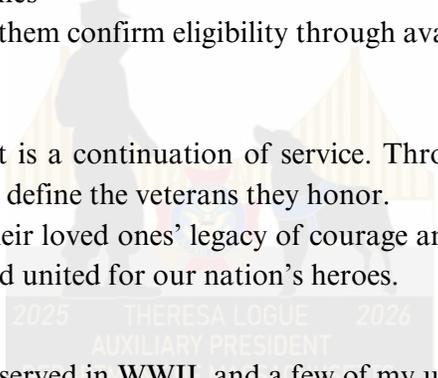
I urge you to look at the people in your family and see if you have anyone that you can sign up to honor and extend your service, especially for the fight in Congress when the numbers really have an influence!

For more information about membership eligibility or how to join your local Auxiliary, visit vfwauxma.org or contact your local VFW Post.

DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE PRESIDENT



Theresa Logue





From the Desk of the State Quartermaster

Greetings Comrades!

I hope everyone who came to the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Awards Banquet had a fantastic time! Congratulations once again to the students who put in a lot of time and effort!

Hopefully spring and warmer temps will be here soon, I'm especially looking forward to baseball season! But let's get down to business... The Commander-in-Chief will be visiting us in March and we're planning a COA meeting on Saturday 3/21 at 1030 in Walpole and immediately following will be a banquet in her honor. We will need everyone who wants to attend to let us know they are coming by Thursday, March 12th. The menu will be steak tips, rice pilaf, and seasonal veggie. It's Conrad's steak tips, so if you're familiar with them you know how good it will be! If not, you're in for a treat!

Make sure to stay up to date on audits. December's is past due at this point and March's will be due by April 30th.

On the tax front – if your post owns real property – don't forget file Form 3ABC with your local Board of Assessor's on or before March 1, 2026. You can find a form [here](#).

If your post or district has a 12/31 year end don't forget about your 990s... those will be due on May 15th. Please send the adjutant a copy of your filing for our records.

Nominations open in March and elections are in April. Please make every effort to get your election reports submitted by the end of April on OMS. Let me know if you need help.

VFW National Day of Service is coming up on the first Saturday of May. Be on the Lookout for communications from National on how to register your event so that you get credit.

Memorial Day will be here before we know it. Get your poppy orders in now so you have them for your drives. If you order in late April or May there's no guarantee you'll have them in time.

Looking ahead to warmer weather and upcoming events... State Convention is being held in Springfield on June 5-6th. Come on out and enjoy some time with comrades and auxiliary, visit the MGM casino down the street, or bring the kids/grandkids to Six Flags. The Basketball Hall of Fame is close by as well!

National convention is coming up in late July. It was moved from Salt Lake City to Reno. And the Sox are in Sacramento while we're there... it's a little over 2 hours driving...

In closing, keep up the good work, let's keep the department moving forward. And don't forget about the half-off life membership program!

Ernest "Scott" Carruthers, Jr.
Ernest "Scott" Carruthers Jr.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

From the Adjutant's Desk,



If you have served in the VFW for more than a day you learned something very quickly. Running a VFW Post is not easy. Oftentimes it resembles herding cats and with all our busy lives, the calendar seems to move faster. Deadlines that were so far away not too long ago are suddenly right in front of you. One thing that has happened statewide this year is that many posts have a slate of new officers who may not be as familiar with how things are supposed to run or how to accomplish their duties. As members ourselves, leadership at the District and State level understand and we are here to help. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance. There are many resources available to assist with officers of any position on our websites at the National and State level. I also offer an informal OMS training every other Tuesday on ZOOM from 6P-7PM. If that is something you are interested in, please email me at adjutant@vfwma.org for the link.

Bill LeBeau

Bill LeBeau
Department Adjutant

Election nominations are to be made at your March meetings per the bylaws with elections happening in the April meetings. The deadline for submitting your election reports is June 1st.

Those are the bylaws. If your post is doing something different, now is the time to correct the process.

The digital age is here. If you are turning reports in, they should be emailed, texted, or faxed. While we will always accept mail, digital copies are best. They do not get lost, there is proof of delivery, and instantaneous. Same with election reports. They need to be submitted online through the OMS system. If your post is not doing that, or doesn't know how, please reach out for assistance.

Finally, I will be sending out your post delegates cards with the Convention letter before April 1st. Please consider attending the state convention June 5-6 at the Sheraton in Springfield. Flyers with details are coming out soon. Thank you all for everything you do!

Bill LeBeau
State Adjutant

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER



Greetings, Comrades!

We are well underway with 2026 and in the home stretch to finish the 2025-2026 program year on a high note! It is very apparent that all of the hard work being done at the Member, Post, and District levels are paying off! There remains a lot of work to be done in the Recruiting and Retaining areas. It is not only important that we recruit new members in to our community, but also to keep the members we have actively engaged at all levels. These two elements work hand in hand.

Please warmly welcome our new members in to our Posts and set the right tone to get them actively engaged. I've had an active first part of the year, highlighted by the Department's newly formed second Color Guard presenting the colors at the Thursday Night Football game at Gillette Stadium as the Patriots hosted the NY Jets! Also, I am proud (BOO!!!!) to have been elected as the initial Seam Squirrel of the Neponset Pup Tent 5, Military Order of the Cooties. This marks the first expansion of the Cooties in Massachusetts in many years. Many more good things to come!

With us entering 2026, we are entering the Semiquincentennial celebration of the United States. This is a golden opportunity the ALL Posts and Districts, as well as the Department, to be involved in all of the commemorations happening across the Commonwealth as we run up to Independence Day! These events are the perfect venues to show our communities that the VFW is still out there doing the good work to support all veterans in our communities! Get out there and seize the momentum to show the flag and represent!! As we continue to look to the future, I am eternally grateful for your support and for the prospect of being your next Department Commander for the 2026-2027 year! Let's finish strong for Commander Henke and our Department!! We can and will do it!!

Out Front!

Craig L. DeOld

Craig DeOld
State Sr. Vice Commander

JR VICE COMMANDER



Comrades, it is difficult to believe that we are only four months away from the state convention. Serving as your Massachusetts VFW Junior Vice Commander, I have seen firsthand how quickly the months pass when they are filled with meaningful work, fellowship, and service to our veterans and communities. As I prepare to travel to Washington, D.C., for the annual VFW Legislative Conference, I carry with me the voices of veterans, service members, caregivers, and families from across our state. As State Junior Vice Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am honored to advocate on behalf of all who have served — and those who stand beside them — to ensure their needs are heard and addressed.

One of our top priorities is reforming the Department of Veterans Affairs' fragmented community care system. While progress was made under the VA MISSION Act of 2018, key programs such as the Foreign Medical Program and CHAMPVA remain outdated and disconnected from today's health care landscape. Veterans and their families deserve a seamless, coordinated system that is accessible, transparent, and centered on their well-being. Community care must work as one unified system, regardless of where someone lives or how they receive care.

During our meetings on Capitol Hill, we will encourage support for the Veterans' ACCESS Act of 2025 and the Foreign Medical Program Modernization Act of 2025 to modernize processes, expand access, and improve oversight. Our goal is to ensure equitable, timely care for veterans at home and abroad, as well as for eligible family members.

We will also advocate for the long-overdue reform of concurrent Disability and Retirement pay receipt. Disabled military retirees should not have to forfeit a portion of their earned retirement pay because they receive VA disability compensation. These benefits were earned through service and sacrifice. We support the Major Richard Star Act to eliminate the offset for combat-injured Chapter 61 retirees and believe Congress should extend full concurrent receipt to all disabled retirees. Fairness, dignity, and financial stability for veterans and their families must remain central to this conversation.

Suicide prevention and mental health transparency are equally critical. Far too many veterans — especially younger veterans — continue to struggle. We support the Written Informed Consent Act to ensure veterans receive clear, written information about the benefits, risks, and alternatives associated with long-term psychiatric medications. We also back the Veteran Suicide Prevention Act to examine how prescribing practices may impact suicide prevention efforts. Open communication, shared decision-making, and culturally competent care strengthen trust and help keep veterans engaged in treatment.

**STATE JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER
PATRICK LOGUE**

JUDGE ADVOCATE



Heath Joseph

**JUDGE ADVOCATE
HEATH JOSEPH**

Being elected as your judge advocate is both an honor and a privilege. This position plays a vital part in ensuring the integrity, legality, and moral strength of our great organization. As the state judge advocate my mission is to protect the VFW's constitutional principles while serving as a trusted advisor and advocate for our members across the state. My job is to interpret and apply the bylaws and procedural guidelines that govern the VFW.

Beyond the technical side of my role, this position is about stewardship and leadership. The men and women that have served our nation with honor deserve a state organization that operates with integrity and unity. Therefore I see my role as not as an enforcer, but as a guardian of trust, ensuring that every decision made reflects our mission to honor the sacrifice of service members and the support of those who wear, or have worn the uniform of our great nation.

At the heart of the VFW are its members, veterans from all walks of life, united by shared experiences and purpose. As state Judge Advocate, I am proud to serve you by upholding our bylaws and principles, and fostering an environment of accountability and respect, and ensuring that the voice of every veteran is treated with the dignity it deserves. Through this work, we continue to strengthen our organization, our communities, and our legacy of service.

As your State inspector, I am only missing three of the district to be inspected and should have them completed by the end of February.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact me through my email.

STATE SURGEON



Hello again, fellow Comrades,

So, we have hit the winter months, and mother nature has hit us harder than usual this year. Then we add the dang hedgehog with a 6 more-week predication. It can make for some very ruff times for our older members who tend to become more reclusive. Which in turn should engage our more mobile members in community outreach. It is statically proven that Depression in one's mental health spikes during the holiday season, and winter months in general.

So, to all our membership I strongly encourage you to get out and touch base with your older membership. Conduct some outdoor family activities like sledding events and such. To help us focus on the whole veteran conceptionally. When I say whole veteran, I am referring to a mental health concept that we are taught which teaches us to remember that we are not treat just as the individual. We need to treat the whole person's concept whereby addressing the family and environment in which the individual is a part of the family needs to change for the betterment of the family which untimely helps the individual get better.

Always remember " No one does more for Veterans"

Joseph Zustra

State Surgeon/ COS
VFW Massachusetts



NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER

Key Issues and Initiatives Shaping Our Work in 2026

Articles by Keith Jackson, National Council Member



As members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars here in Massachusetts, we know that our strength comes from staying connected not only within our Posts and Departments, but with the broader mission unfolding at the national level. The past year has brought significant developments that directly impact our veterans, our advocacy efforts, and the future of our organization. Here's a look at the major national initiatives shaping the VFW's work today.

Defending Veterans' Benefits: VFW Challenges VA Disability Rating Rule Change

One of the most urgent issues at the national level is the VFW's strong opposition to the Department of Veterans Affairs' interim rule altering how disability ratings are evaluated. National leadership has demanded that the VA rescind this change immediately, warning that it could unfairly reduce benefits for veterans living with chronic pain, musculoskeletal injuries, and mental health conditions.

The VFW has made it clear that any policy shift that jeopardizes earned benefits violates the fundamental promise made to those who served. This remains a top advocacy priority, and members across the country including here in Massachusetts are encouraged to stay engaged as the issue develops.

VFW Testifies Before Congress on VA Oversight

The VFW continues to be a leading voice on Capitol Hill. Recently, VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs regarding concerns about fraudulent practices in the VA disability claims process. Gallucci emphasized the need to "Honor the Contract" between the nation and its service members, underscoring that veterans should never bear the burden of systemic failures.

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER

This testimony reinforces the VFW's role as a watchdog for accountability and fairness within the VA system.

Membership Growth and Recognition Programs Continue to Expand

Membership remains the lifeblood of the VFW, and national leadership has rolled out an ambitious 2025–2026 Membership Program under Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore.

The program includes:

- The All-American Program
- Triple Crown Awards
- Individual Recruiting Awards
- Legacy Life Membership initiatives
- Department-level challenges and recognition

These efforts aim to strengthen Posts, reward outstanding recruiters, and ensure the VFW continues to grow and evolve.

Additionally, the monthly Commander's Challenge continues to energize Posts nationwide. Points are awarded for recruiting new members and upgrading existing ones to Life Membership, with top-performing Posts recognized at the National Convention.

For us in Massachusetts, this is an opportunity to showcase our commitment and leadership on the national stage.

Honoring Veterans' Stories and Sacrifices

National VFW communications continue to highlight the lived experiences of veterans across the country. Recent stories such as that of former Staff Sergeant Donna L. Jefferies, who has lived with service-connected pain and mobility challenges for more than four decades remind us why our mission matters.

These narratives reinforce the importance of our advocacy and the need to protect the benefits and services veterans rely on.

What This Means for Massachusetts

As a Department, we play a crucial role in advancing these national priorities. Whether it's participating in membership drives, engaging with lawmakers, or supporting veterans navigating the VA system, our actions here at home strengthen the VFW's voice across the country.

The challenges ahead are real but so is our resolve. Together, we continue to uphold the VFW's promise: No one does more for veterans.

Keith Jackson

VFW Auxiliary

Top 10 Reasons for Your Post to Have an Auxiliary

Benefits of Establishing a VFW Auxiliary at Your Post

1. Offers valuable assistance with event preparation.
2. Assists with “Buddy”® Poppy drives.
3. Opens the door to potential members.
4. Assists in recruiting and retaining members to strengthen the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
5. Provides events and volunteer opportunities for veterans’ family members.
6. Boosts the Post’s visibility in the community by being involved in more local activities and events.
7. Increases Program participation and helps spread the word on scholarship and youth programs.
8. Presents an opportunity to serve more veterans, active-duty military, and their families.
9. Increases the number of advocates to fight for veterans’ rights and benefits.
10. Positively reinforces the values and beliefs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



Frequently Asked Questions

- Does it cost the Post anything?
- The VFW Auxiliary Charter Kit fee is \$100.00. The Post and/or Department and/or the interested, eligible applicants may pay the Charter fee. The Charter fee accompanies the completed Charter application.
- How long does it take to start?
- From the time your Post votes to have an Auxiliary, it could take from two (2) to four (4) months to get an Auxiliary up and running.

Ready to Add an Auxiliary to your Post?

1. In accordance with the VFW Bylaws, a notice is to be mailed or emailed to each Post member advising them that members will be voting on having an Auxiliary and that the vote will take place at a specific meeting.
2. In accordance with the VFW Bylaws, a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Post members present is required to set into action the formation of a new Auxiliary to that Post.
3. Inform the Department President of the approval and the Department President will then assign an Auxiliary Organizer who will work with the post to obtain the required number of charter members (15) and filling out necessary paperwork.

Interested? Please contact Theresa Logue MA Dept President at thelogues1@comcast.net

Massachusetts Veterans Foundation

Foundation Updates

Ernest Carruthers, Foundation Treasurer

Comrades, on behalf of Keith Jackson, President of the Foundation and the entire Foundation Board of Directors, I wanted to share some exciting news with you all!

The foundation board voted to change the name to the Massachusetts Veterans Foundation. The board believes this name change will protect the foundation in the years ahead and allows us to maintain our independence. In the coming weeks and months we will be launching a new foundation specific website that will feature information on the board, testimonials from veterans the foundation has assisted, and applications for foundation grants.

Over the past several months the foundation board has been active in meeting to discuss various needs by veterans and organizations that support veterans. Two recent examples include support of a veteran with much needed home repairs required to keep his home livable. In another instance of support for veterans, the foundation was able to assist a family where the veteran was self-employed and the sole provider of the family. The veteran was experiencing a serious medical situation that required a lengthy hospital stay and uncertain future. The foundation was able to provide gift cards to a local grocery store and assist with a utility bill.

The foundation is also proud to partner with the Town of Ludlow in a 3 year test of funding a service officer for the western part of Massachusetts. The department has historically had a tough time finding AND retaining a western Massachusetts service officer. Under this new partnership, the foundation is providing a 3 year grant to the Town of Ludlow to hire and train a service officer that is strictly dedicated to VA claims for veterans. This individual is not working chapter 115 claims or other miscellaneous tasks for the town.

The foundation can't do all this great work without the support of our veterans and our VFW Posts. The foundation is a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit and donations to the foundation are tax deductible on your federal and Massachusetts tax return. I encourage each of you to make a donation to the foundation if you're able.

VFW Riders Group



Greetings Comrades, Sisters and Brothers,

I hope everyone is doing well, you have gotten yourselves shoveled out, and the snow has started to melt since the last snow storm. As of this article, there is supposed to be a major Nor'easter headed to the North East, but, on the bright side, Spring is right around the corner!!! With Spring in mind, that brings up Motorcycles, riders and the Newest subordinate "Auxiliary" organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars – the VFW Riders Group (VFWRG).

When I spoke to the COA a few months back, we were just getting started as a New Organization and the national riders committee was full of gas and oil and ready to do burn outs on our bikes as the VFWRG. Well, we had to Slow Our Roll as things didn't move as fast as we wanted, especially when it comes to starting a new organization right. For over 20 years the VFW riders have been loosely banded together at the State, District and Post levels, mostly un-organized, but still riding and raising money for Veterans, their families, and the community in which they reside. Without accurate records to quote from, the VFW Riders have raised more than \$100K for VFW programs over this time and more can and will be raised as we move along.

Nothing brings our great Korean and Vietnam War veterans together with the newest generation of veterans, better than a good motorcycle ride with hamburgers and hotdogs afterward. We don't do it for the food, we do it to help our comrades, sisters and brothers, their families, the communities and for camaraderie.



So, here is an update on the newest sub-organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, what we've done and where we need to get to. The VFW Riders Group has been Chartered by the VFW (the actual charter hangs on a wall at national headquarters, somewhere) and we have applied to the State of Missouri to be Incorporated. When that is approved, and hopefully soon, we will get our EIN then apply for our Non-Profit 501(c)19 status. We hope to have this completed prior to the convention.

Along with the three items mentioned above, the committee has been working on the initial VFWRG Bylaws that will need to be "blessed" by national VFW (legalities) before our current rider membership can review and vote on them at our first annual meeting at the next National Convention in Reno. If passed by our members, we then, at the same meeting, will vote for and elect our first slate of National Officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Chaplain and Sergeant-at-Arms) for the Veterans of Foreign Wars Riders Group of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Some of the other main details pertaining to the National VFWRG organization is: the VFWRG will be open to ALL VFW and VFW AUXILIARY members in good standing. This also includes those who Do Not ride motorcycles but wish to join to support the VFWRG. The VFWRG organization will be structured with National officers, Conference Representatives, State VFWRG's and Chapter VFWRG's within the state.

The VFWRG will not be associated, as a committee, with any Post, District or Department, but they must be approved by the department in which they reside. Much like the Cooties, the VFWRG at the Chapter level will be sponsored by a Post or District and Chapter members can come from multiple Posts/Districts. There are many more details that must be worked out in the coming months and our committee members meet weekly on zoom to keep the ball moving. In the meantime, the current VFW Riders out there continue to operate as they have always done and new groups can still organize as a committee in a Post until such time when the National VFWRG Organization is authorized to issue subordinate Charters to States and Chapters.

As of today, we have a contest going on to design a new VFW Riders logo that can be worn by ALL members of the VFWRG. Unity is the main objective of the "one" patch design since VFW Auxiliary members can't wear the VFW Cross logo, nor do they want to. When riding in a group, nothing speaks Unity like everyone wearing the same back patch on their vest, Riding for Veterans.

If you have any questions concerning the VFW Riders Group in general, the VFWRG in your Post/District or whatever, please contact the Dept. of MA Riders Chair and Dist. 11 Commander, J.J. Barrett at (jayjay3167@hotmail.com) or myself, Russell Jobe, National Riders Committee member, at (RJobe@vfwma.org).



VFW Cooties



New Cootie Pup Tent Installed!
Ernest Carruthers, Blanket Bum Neponset Pup Tent 5

On Sunday, January 11, 2026 immediately following VFW MA District 5 meeting at the Boston Police Post, a new Pup Tent was installed!

Neponset Pup Tent 5, named for the Neponset River which meanders through District 5 from Foxborough to Quincy/Dorchester, consists of members throughout the district (and beyond).

The initiation of the new Cooties and Pup Tent was provided over by Denis Querrad and Leon Rideout of New Hampshire and Jeff Najarian, PSC of Plymouth Rock Pup Tent 14.

Following the initiation, Craig DeOld had the honor of being voted in as the Pup Tent's first Seam Squirrel, Ernest Carruthers was elected the Blanket Bum, and Rob Santiago as the Hide Gimlet. Additional officers elected were Mike Raymond (CCDB), Steve Ruggiero (Provost Marshall),

The Pup Tent did not waste any time springing into action! The CCDB and Sky Pilot, Mike Raymond, visited patients at the West Roxbury VA just before Valentine's Day gifting them a Valentine's card with a Massachusetts Lottery scratch ticket.

We are looking forward to getting out more and having a lousy time!

The Pup Tent will be meeting immediately following the District 5 meeting in September, November, January, March, and May. Those looking to join Neponset Pup Tent 5 can contact Craig DeOld (cdeold@vfwma.org), Ernest Carruthers (stateqm@vfwma.org) or Mike Raymond (mraymond@vfwma.org).

Those looking to start their own Pup Tent, perhaps as a part of their district, should reach out to Mike Raymond as he is now intimately familiar with the process. PSC Jeff Najarian is also a great resource when it comes to all things Cootie.



Meet our newest Team Member

Covering Western Massachusetts



Larry Brace is a dedicated veteran with over two decades of service in the United States Air Force and Air National Guard. Born and raised in the Midwest, including Texas, Nebraska, and Colorado, Larry's journey in aviation maintenance began in 1985 when he joined the Air Force as a Tactical Aircraft Maintenance Technician. He was stationed at Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire, working on the FB-111A aircraft. After leaving active duty in 1989, Larry chose to remain in New England, drawn by the region's seacoast charm.

Larry Brace is a dedicated veteran with over two decades of service in the United States Air Force and Air National Guard. Born and raised in the Midwest, including Texas, Nebraska, and Colorado, Larry's journey in aviation maintenance began in 1985 when he joined the Air Force as a Tactical Aircraft Maintenance Technician. He was stationed at Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire, working on the FB-111A aircraft. After leaving active duty in 1989, Larry chose to remain in New England, drawn by the region's seacoast charm.

In April 2001, Larry re-enlisted with the Massachusetts Air National Guard in Westfield, Massachusetts. He continued his passion for aircraft maintenance, serving on the A-10A Thunderbolt II from 2001 to 2007. Following the 2007 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, the F-15C Eagles from Otis Air National Guard Base were reassigned to the 104th Fighter Wing. Larry transitioned to maintaining the F-15C Eagle from 2007 until his retirement in 2020. During his tenure, he also served as the 104th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's First Sergeant from 2011 to 2016.

Larry's deployments included Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012, and European Theater Security Packages in 2016 and 2018. In February 2020, he retired on disability after a distinguished career. Through a partnership with the MA Veterans Foundation, (Formerly known as the VFW MA Foundation) and the Town of Ludlow, Larry serves as a Veterans Claims Consultant at the Town of Ludlow Veterans Center, assisting fellow veterans in accessing their entitled benefits.

Outside of his professional commitments, Larry enjoys hiking with his dog, tinkering in the garage, and spending quality time with his family and friends, including his five grandsons.



STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA AT BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

When I attended NATCON, The National Conference hosted by Student Veterans of America (SVA), I did not expect it to become a turning point in my life. NATCON brings together thousands of student veterans, supporters, and leaders from across the country to focus on leadership development, career advancement, and strengthening the veteran community. For me, it became something far more personal.

My transition out of the military was not smooth. After leaving service, I isolated myself. I became less active, unsure of where I fit in the civilian world. The structure and brotherhood I once relied on were suddenly gone. For a time, I moved forward without direction or community.

Joining the Bristol Community College chapter of Student Veterans of America began to change that. But attending NATCON accelerated it.

From the moment I arrived, I was surrounded by Marines and veterans from all over the country. The shared culture and values immediately reconnected me to a sense of belonging I had deeply missed. One of the most meaningful moments of the conference was meeting James Mattis. As someone I have long admired for his leadership and integrity, seeing him in person reinforced a powerful truth: leadership is about character, discipline, and lifelong service.

Throughout the conference, we attended breakout sessions focused on leadership, mental resilience, professional growth, and community engagement. These sessions challenged me to think beyond personal success and toward meaningful impact

We also participated in the Wear Blue Run to Remember, honoring service members who made the ultimate sacrifice. Running alongside fellow veterans in remembrance grounded the experience in humility and gratitude. It was a reminder that ambition must always remain rooted in service.

Equally impactful were the connections formed. I built a strong bond with the student veterans from Fitchburg State University's SVA chapter and networked with veterans from across the nation. Organizations such as the VFW and the American Legion were also acknowledged throughout the conference as pillars of veteran support and continued service. Their presence reinforced that leadership within the veteran community extends far beyond the classroom.

Most importantly, I would not have had the opportunity to attend NATCON without the support of organizations and individuals who believe in investing in student veterans. The backing and encouragement from veteran-support organizations like the VFW and the American Legion made this experience possible. Their commitment to supporting veterans in their educational and leadership journeys directly impacted my growth. This was not just a sponsored trip; it was an investment in transformation.

Emotionally, NATCON forced me to confront how far I had come. Initially, I felt intimidated and uncertain, questioning whether I belonged among so many accomplished leaders. But as the conference progressed, those feelings shifted. For the first time since my transition, I felt momentum. My ambition and motivation did not simply return, they skyrocketed.

NATCON symbolizes more than a conference in my story. It represents movement from isolation to engagement, from uncertainty to purpose. It reminded me that growth begins when we choose community over withdrawal.

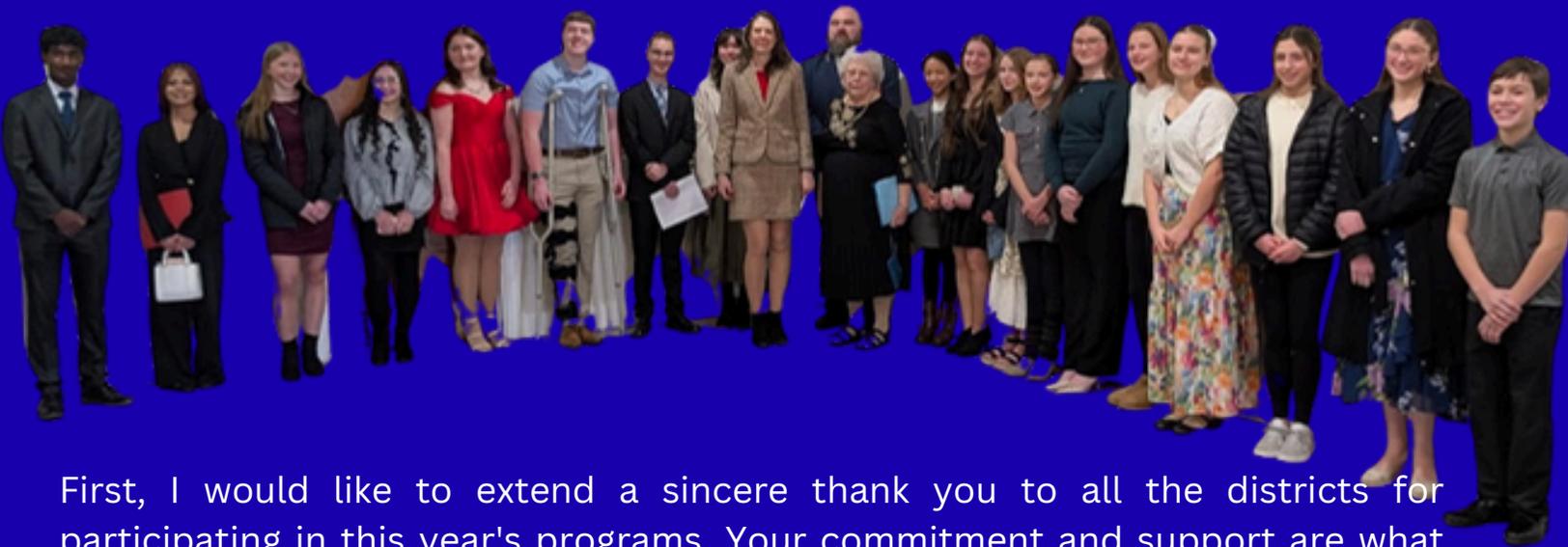
Moving forward, I intend to lead with greater intention within my SVA chapter, strengthen regional collaboration, and actively give back to the veteran and local community. I want to mentor veterans navigating difficult transitions and help create the type of support system I once needed.

If you are a veteran who feels disconnected or hesitant to get involved, I encourage you to take that step. Engage with Student Veterans of America. Connect with your local VFW or American Legion. Show up to events. Community does not arrive automatically; it is built through participation. The growth you are looking for may be waiting in the very spaces you have been hesitant to enter.

My first NATCON did more than inspire me; it redefined my direction. Leadership is not something we wait for. It is something we grow into through connection, service, and action. And sometimes, all it takes is one decision to show up.



Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen



First, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all the districts for participating in this year's programs. Your commitment and support are what make these events successful.

I would also like to offer a heartfelt congratulations to all of our winners. We are proud of their achievements, and we wish them the best of luck as they advance to the National competition.

Special congratulations to District 6 and Freetown Memorial Post 6643, who sponsored the Patriot's Pen First Place winner, 8th Grader Amelia Brick; and District 15 and Townsend Post 6538, who sponsored the Voice of Democracy First Place winner, Olivia Harriman

Thank you once again to everyone involved with making this another successful essay year!

Best regards,

Dawn Slaven
Patriot's Pen Chair

Congratulations **TO THE TOP 10**



Patriot's Pen

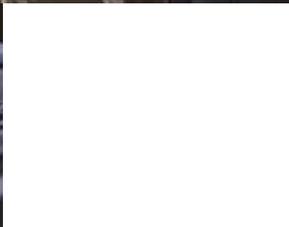
- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1st Place | District 6 Amelia Black |
| 2 nd Place | District 5 Letian QI |
| 3 rd Place | District 15 Madeleine Chapelaine |
| 4 th Place | District 9 Sophie Sparks |
| 5 th Place | District 18 Lucas Bushey |
| 6 th Place | District 7 Tierney Stratton |
| 7 th Place | District 12 Emily Scharath |
| 8 th Place | District 11 Eliza Brown |
| 9 th Place | District 10 Maren Beltramini |
| 10 th Place | District 8 Bella Flannery |



Voice of Democracy

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1st Place | District 15 Olivia Harriman |
| 2 nd Place | District 5 Gavin Warnakulasooriya |
| 3 rd Place | District 18 Montserrat Llacuna |
| 4 th Place | District 7 Allison Fleury |
| 5 th Place | District 11 Nathan Hart |
| 6 th Place | District 12 Adam Harden |
| 7 th Place | District 10 Sophia Hctor |
| 8 th Place | District 8 Sophia Linden |
| 9 th Place | District 6 Jadelyn Bailey |
| 10 th Place | District 9 Mickeayla Pietri |

Voice of Democracy





Patriot's Pen



PATRIOT'S PEN



Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen Banquet



Legislative Priority Goals



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.



NO ONE DOES MORE
FOR VETERANS.

2026
PRIORITY
GOALS

Delivering the promise to our veterans, service members and their families.

Budget

To fully fund relevant programs for veterans, service members and their families, Congress must:

- Hold leaders accountable to “Honor the Contract” and uphold their end of the military service contract by opposing any effort to cut or reduce veteran benefits.
- Ensure sufficient, timely appropriations and proper budget oversight for VA.
- Authorize VA to receive reimbursements from TRICARE and Medicare.
- Never reduce one veteran’s benefits to pay for a not her.
- Modernize and reform VA and DOD programs that do not meet the needs of service members, veterans and families.

Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

To ensure veterans and their survivors have timely access to earned benefits, Congress and VA must:

- Implement the VFW’s recommendations to improve the VA disability claims process, specifically appeals, digital claims, DBQs and disability examinations.
- Crack down on unaccredited claims consultants known as Claim Sharks.
- Study all toxic and environmental exposures, and implement programs to ensure health care and benefits are provided to all exposed service members and veterans.
- Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, burial allowances and other benefits for survivors.
- Improve the accuracy of disability compensation claims related to military sexual trauma.

Education, Employment and Transition Assistance

To ensure veterans succeed after leaving military service, Congress, VA, DOD and DOL must:

- Improve education benefits through modernized student housing and supply allowances, child care stipends, parity for National Guard and Reserve members and elimination of delimiting dates.
- Improve the delivery of the Veteran Readiness and Employment program to include administrative support for counselors and standardized training.
- Ensure parity of VA and DOD education programs with other federal programs.
- Expand small business, hiring preference, tax incentives and entrepreneurship resources for veterans and military spouses.
- Increase funding for HUD-VASH vouchers, grant and per diem payments and pilot programs to combat veteran homelessness.
- Conduct oversight of VA’s Transition Assistance Program to ensure compliance with the law, and require the inclusion of accredited claims representatives.
- Protect the VA Home Loan Guaranty program and expand it to the reserve components.
- Eliminate red tape preventing effective use of education and employment benefits.

National Security, Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA

To fully support the all-volunteer force, protect our nation’s citizens and defend American interests around the world, Congress and DOD must:

- Ensure DPAA is fully funded to perform its personnel recovery mission.
- Deter threats to our national security by supporting our allies in Ukraine, Israel, Korea and Taiwan.
- Ensure all service members who served in harm’s way—to include foreign nationals, translators and allies—receive the recognition, care and benefits they may have earned.

Health Care

To ensure service members and veterans receive timely access to high-quality health care without increasing cost shares, Congress, VA and DOD must:

- Eliminate service member and veteran suicide.
- Improve the coordination of community care at VA, including CHAMPVA and the Foreign Medical Program.
- Strengthen care and research for mental health, blast overpressure and traumatic brain injuries.
- Research the efficacy of alternative therapies for PTSD.
- Improve oversight of Vet Centers to ensure adequate staffing, resources and funding.
- Enhance programs and services for women and underserved veterans.
- Preserve the integrity of TRICARE.
- Properly implement VA and DOD health IT systems.
- Expand nursing home eligibility and long-term care options.

Military Readiness

To maintain a strong and ready all-volunteer force capable of protecting American interests, Congress and DOD must:

- Enhance quality of life and health care programs that allow service members to focus on the mission.
- Ensure equity of benefits for reserve component service members.
- End the military retirement pay and VA disability compensation offset.
- Provide benefits enrollment for all transitioning service members.
- Eliminate sexual assault and harassment from the military.
- Increase military base pay so that it is competitive with relevant civilian pay.
- Ensure that military housing and work spaces are safe and modern.
- Eliminate food insecurity in the military.

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



Grassroots Efforts

The VFW Action Corps is our national grassroots advocacy network comprised of more than 300,000 VFW members and patriotic supporters of veterans. This group stays up-to-date on the issues facing our veterans, our military and their families, standing ready to email, write, call and visit our nation's lawmakers to make their voices heard. The VFW Action Corps is free and open to all patriotic Americans who care about the military and veterans' communities.

Join the VFW Action Corps today and add your voice to the thousands of veterans' advocates making a difference every day, and if you're already a member of the VFW Action Corps, encourage your friends and neighbors to join the effort!

Participants receive:

The VFW Action Corps Weekly, an easy-to-read electronic newsletter that highlights the VFW's advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill.

Immediate access to a nationwide database of contact information for all elected officials, a congressional directory.

Regular VFW "Action Alerts" on how to get involved when our nation's veterans, service members and their families need their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

The VFW Action Corps is what gives the VFW its strength in advocating for our nation's heroes. Working hand-in-hand with the VFW's National Legislative Service -- whose office is in eye-shot of the Capitol dome in Washington -- members of the VFW Action Corps are armed with all of the tools and information they need to help the VFW in its mission to support our nation's veterans.



VFW

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



Carol Whitmore Commander-in-Chief's Banquet

DATE: Saturday, March 21st 2026

VENUE: Walpole VFW Post 5188

57 Robbins Road Walpole MA 02081

MEET & GREET 12:00 PM - 1:00PM

BANQUET TIME: 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Menu: Steak Tips, Rice Pilaf, Chef's Vegetable

Tickets: \$45 PP Tables of 8 Available Deadline March 13th, 2026

Purchase online at www.vfwma.org

Mail to: VFW MA 24 Beacon Street Ste 546-1 Boston, MA 02133

Call 617-727-2612 or email admin@vfwma.org



Life Membership *Special!*



Convert your annual membership to life today and we will cover half (1/2) the cost

More Info: www.vfwma.org

Questions: Contact Membership Chairman

Veterans of Foreign Wars Massachusetts

106th

State Convention

📍 **SPRINGFIELD, MA**



JUNE 4-7, 2026

Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel
One Monarch Place Springfield, Massachusetts, 01144

\$155.00 USD / Night

Thursday Night is included in the group rate

SCAN QR CODE OR Visit: www.vfwma.org for
more information

PARKING IS \$10 PER DAY

FREE PARKING AVAILABLE AT MGM CASINO

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS

206TH STATE CONVENTION

Dinner

BANQUET

MEAL | SATURDAY

\$60 | 6TH | 6PM

JUNE 2026

Sheraton Springfield
Monarch Place Hotel

One Monarch Place
Springfield Massachusetts, 01144

OPTION 1

Chicken Cape Cod: Roasted Breast filled with
Cranberry Stuffing and topped with a light
Cranberry Herb Sauce

OPTION 2

Baked New England Serod: with Ritz Cracker
Crumb Topping

OPTION 3

Butternut Squash Ravioli: Served with Sauteed
Mushrooms and Spinach, all in a light brandy
cream sauce

FOR MORE INFO:

SCAN QR CODE OR VISIT WWW.VFWMA.ORG

PARKING AT HOTEL IS \$10 PER DAY
FREE PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT MGM CASINO



Community Service



Community Service reports are required in order to achieve All-American status, and these must be submitted every quarter through OMS. The Department no longer collects reports and submits them, we instead review your submissions and authorize their validity to National.

Post and District Commanders, Vice-Commanders, Quartermasters, and Adjutants can all submit reports through OMS for their respective elements. One person should be assigned to compile and submit these reports as necessary to ensure that there is no lapse.



Each and every one of you does fantastic work to further the mission of the VFW, and you should be getting credit for it.

Finally, the Day of Service requirement for All-American must be registered through vfw.org as well, and is only applicable during the month of May. We will have zoom trainings by our State Adjutant in the very near future on how to submit these reports, so please take advantage of them. Generally, these trainings are offered on Tuesday evenings but check in to ensure that there is indeed a training as there are times when scheduling conflicts do not permit this.

Keep making Massachusetts shine!

Troy W. Henke, State Commander
VFW MA.
2025-2026





DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS

Department Calendar 2025-2026 As of 2/9/26 2026

Date	Time	Event	Location
March 1-5		Legislative Conference	Washington D.C.
March 5-8		National Aux President Visit	
March 8	10:00AM	District 5 Meeting	Avon Post 8892
March 8	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	Townsend Post 6538
March 9	6:30PM	District 12 Meeting	
March 15	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
March 15	10:00AM	District 18 Meeting	Stoneham Post 620
March 15	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veterans Center
March 15	1:00PM	District 6 Meeting	Easton Post 2547
March 15	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Grafton Post 1497
March 20-22		Chief's Visit	
March 21	10:30AM	COA	Walpole Post 5188
March 21	12:30PM-3PM	Chief's Banquet	Walpole Post 5188
April 16-19		National Senior Vice Training	Kansas City, MO
April 18	TBD	District 15 BBQ	Townsend Post 6538
April 19	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veterans Center
April 19	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Millbury Post 3329
April 26	11:00AM	District 7 Meeting	Hamden Post 9397
May 2	11:00 AM	Loyalty Day	Horace A. Moses Scott Reservation – Russell, MA
May 3	10:00AM	District 5 Meeting	Bellingham Post 7272
May 3	10:00AM	District 15 Meeting	N. Billerica Post 8819
May 3	10:30AM	District 10 Meeting	Salem Post 1524
May 9	10:30AM	COA	Boston Police Post 1018
May 11	6:30PM	District 12 Meeting	Plymouth Post 1822
May 17	10:00AM	District 9 Meeting	Dalton Post 9566
May 17	10:00AM	District 18 Meeting/Convention	Lexington Post 3007
May 17	12:00PM	District 11 Meeting	Leominster Veterans Center
May 17	1:00PM	District 6 Meeting	Freetown Post 6643
May 17	2:00PM	District 8 Meeting	Upton Post 5594
June 4-7		106 th State Convention	Sheraton – Springfield, MA

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NEXT DEADLINE
June 15, 2026

